

380 ANIMALS IN THE SCHOOL

The Board recognizes that animals have educational value in the school setting, but only under conditions that insure the safety and well-being of the students, staff, and the animal. Live animals in the classroom provide opportunities to learn about diversity, habitat, humane care, animal growth and development, reproduction and behavior. A teacher must have a clear understanding of and a strong commitment to the responsible care of living animals before making any decision to use live animals for educational study. Preparation for the use of live animals should include acquisition of knowledge on care appropriate to the species being used including housing, food, exercise, and the appropriate placement of the animals at the conclusion of the study. Reputable pet stores in the community are excellent resources to help a teacher answer these questions.

Prior approval must be received from the building administrator before any animals are brought into the school (Exhibit A). Animals in schools shall be planned and approved in accordance with established procedures.

Purpose of Animals in the Schools Policy

A written, Board-approved Animals in the Schools policy will:

- Ensure a safe learning environment for both people and animals
- Maximize the beneficial impacts of animals in the school setting
- Establish guidelines for the integration of an animal into the classroom setting
- Help teachers with the decision-making process with regards to whether or not to include an animal into the classroom setting
- Provide guidelines for animal visitations to the classroom

Resident Animals in Schools

Consideration of a Resident Animal

Live animals in the classroom provide opportunities to learn about diversity, habitat, humane care, animal growth and development, reproduction and behavior.

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Animal Selection

Teachers considering an animal must assure that animals entering the classroom are healthy and free of transmissible diseases or other problems that may endanger human health.

Approval of Resident Animal

Prior approval of the building administrator must be obtained before consideration is given to an animal residing in the school setting. The building administrator, nurse, and requesting teacher will consider all aspects of this policy prior to approving a study of health risks to students and staff members that will be using the classroom space in which the animal will reside.

Upon the approval of the building administrator, the requesting teacher will survey all students and staff using an allergy information form (Exhibit B). The teacher should modify the top portion of the form to reflect the animal being considered as a resident animal.

When all student allergy survey forms have been returned, the building administrator, nurse and requesting teacher will review the data and make a final decision regarding the approval of a resident animal. Student allergy forms should be kept on file at the building office.

Care of Resident Animal

The classroom teacher must assume primary responsibility for the humane treatment of the animal while in the classroom. Animals must be properly housed, have adequate food and water, and their habitats must be kept clean on a daily basis.

The classroom teacher is responsible for developing guidelines for student/animal interaction. These guidelines should include student training on how to handle the animal.

Education with animals should be used to re-emphasize proper hygiene and hand washing recommendations. All children who handle animals should be instructed to wash their hands immediately after handling them.

Animals should not be allowed in the vicinity of sinks where children wash their hands, in any area where food is prepared, stored, or served, or in areas used for the cleaning or storage of food utensils or dishes. Children should not be allowed to handle or clean up any form of animal waste (feces, urine, blood, etc.). Animal wastes should be disposed of in accordance with universal precaution's procedures as referenced in the district's blood borne pathogen policy.

Animals should not be allowed to roam free around the classroom or school.

If animals are to be kept in the classroom on days when classes are not in session, the teacher must make arrangements for their care and safety. No animals will be housed in the schools during the summer break or when school is not in session. Students are allowed to take the animal(s) home with parent permission.

Any time a resident animal bites or scratches a person, the classroom teacher will notify the building administrator, parents, and the school nurse. It is the responsibility of the building administrator to determine if additional measures need to be taken.

There should be a plan in place to provide for the care of resident animals in the event of an emergency school closing.

If the teachers and/or building administrator becomes aware of potentially harmful health or safety concerns, adverse smells or disruptive sounds regarding animals in the school, he/she is directed to take appropriate steps, including removal of the animal if necessary.

Transportation of Animals

Animals may not be transported on school buses with the exception of animals certified to assist persons with disabilities.

Animal Visitation to Schools

From time to time there will be a request by a student, parent, PTA, or other organization to allow an animal to visit the school setting. The building administrator must approve all requests for such visitation. The same guidelines as those considered when approving a resident animal should be taken into consideration when determining whether an animal visitation may occur.

Certified Service Dogs

Dogs that are specifically certified to assist individuals with disabilities will be permitted on district property and at district events. For students, the need for a service dog will be documented in the individual educational plan (IEP). This plan will also include any necessary precautions.

CROSS REF: 380.1 – Therapy Dogs in Schools

APPROVED: July 9, 2001

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